

Is There a Thief in Your House?

Nobody likes receiving an unusually high bill. Knowing how that may occur will help you avoid it, and here is what to do if you receive one.

Causes of unusually high bills

The most common cause of a high bill is a malfunctioning toilet. Parts inside the toilet tank wear out and flappers can get stuck, allowing water to constantly drain, or "run," filling the tank again and again as it does. Is your toilet a thief? If the water in your toilet sounds like it never shuts off or you hear a "whooshing" sound when it has not been used, you may have a leaking toilet. A toilet in need of repair can quickly run up a high bill because it is just like leaving a faucet tap on -- and bills are based on water consumption.

Other causes of a high bill could include a leaky faucet or appliance, someone leaving a faucet on inside or outside the home, a high volume of lawn watering, filling a swimming pool or a malfunctioning water meter.

What to do if you receive a high bill

If you receive an unusually high water bill, call Customer Service at 645-8276 as soon as possible. You may receive a notification letter that the meter is being re-read due to an unusually high reading, which our billing system prompts. If the meter reading is confirmed, you will be advised to call a plumber to check the home for leaks. To aid in your detective work, Leak Detection Guides and dye packets are available; please call Customer Service to request these items. If the dye placed in the toilet tank appears in the bowl without flushing, that is a sign of a toilet leak. Food dye works for this test as well. Be sure to flush after the dye test to avoid staining the toilet tank.

Payment plan arrangements are available to spread out a balance that got out of control, and credit card payment is accepted. Call Customer Service for more information. Whatever you do, don't ignore the high bill and hope the next bill will look better. The source of the problem must be found, and non-payment of a bill can lead to a water turnoff.

Frequently asked questions about high bills

Crews recently repaired a water main break in our neighborhood. Could this be the cause of a high bill? Water consumption is measured by a meter which is usually located inside the building; it measures the water as it passes through the meter, so no.



Are adjustments made on a high bill?

The answer depends on what is found. If a meter is found to be malfunctioning, an adjustment can usually be made to reflect normal consumption for the property. However, if a high bill is the result of a private property issue, such as a leak or running toilet, the customer is responsible for the bill because the water was used. This is why it is important to keep all plumbing in good working order.

How can I prevent a high bill?

Aside from fixing leaks that can quickly run up water consumption, we can all control our water and sewer bills to some extent by conserving water. Wash laundry and dishes only on full loads, use low flow showerheads, and turn off the faucet when the water is not in use. Outside tips include using a rain barrel to water plants, and if you water your lawn, remember that one inch of water a week is all that a lawn needs to remain healthy.

It is recommended to check your inside meter and outside remote register at least twice a year to make sure the numbers match. If you see any deviations please let Customer Service know.

Are you a senior, on a fixed income or qualify for any assistance programs? If so, you may qualify for the city's low income and/or senior discount programs. For more information, call Customer Service at 645-8276 or visit our web site at www.utilities.columbus.gov.

Please visit www.columbus.gov/ReduceYourBill/ to learn how to check your meter reading, check your home for leaks, to conserve water and more.



Please join us on Facebook (Columbus Public Utilities) and Twitter (@cdpu)



Save Water and Money Make Your Home a GreenSpot



Join more than 12,000 GreenSpot homes and businesses that have made the commitment to save water, and a whole lot more. It's easy to do. Simply visit ColumbusGreenSpot.org and fill out the on-line application. Choose from the commitments listed or tell us what you're already doing to conserve and protect water, conserve energy and reduce waste.

To help you on your way, your household will be eligible for a rebate on a rain barrel, compost bin or native plants through the GreenSpot Backyard program which is open to members throughout the growing season (April - October).



Conserve and Protect Water

Here are a few ways you can commit to conserve and protect water:

- Turn off water while brushing teeth.
- Spend less time in the shower.
- Sweep debris from sidewalks and driveways and dispose of it in the trash.
- Pick up pet waste, bag it and drop it in the trash.



Conserve Energy

Here are a few ways you can commit to conserve energy:

- Wash clothes in cold water.
- Unplug electronics when finished using them.
- Replace incandescent bulbs with high-efficiency LEDs or CFLs and dispose of properly.
- Clean the coils on the refrigerator every six months.



Reduce Waste

Here are a few ways you can commit to reducing waste:

- Carry a reusable bag when shopping.
- Choose products with less packaging.
- Pay bills online.
- Ask to be taken off junk mail listings.
- Recycle paper, steel, glass and plastic.



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